

310 FRENCH REVOLUTION AS A WORLD FORCE

State recognizes no authority above itself, and no duty except to itself, wars will continue. There must therefore be some loose federal union, and its members must be self-governing. Not till selfish and capricious autocracies are replaced by representative institutions will a new system of relations between States become possible. Every people must become master of its own fate. For an autocracy to plunge into war is the easiest thing in the world, and requires no greater effort on the part of the ruler than to issue orders for a hunt. But if the consent of the citizens is required for the making of war, they will think twice before they undertake such a bad business. For a bad business it is, whatever the result. Victory can never decide the question of right. The transformation of Europe into a loose federation of unarmed and self-governing communities, settling their disputes by arbitration, will take a long time ; but Nature urges us forward to the highest and most arduous of human tasks. Kant was a child of the Aufklarung in his belief in the majesty of reason; but in his demand for the co-operation of the people in the work of government and the maintenance of peace he derives from Rousseau, and stretches out his hand to the democratic forces which the Aufklarung despised. His moral and political philosophy was grounded on the conviction, which he shared with the men of 1789, that- we are rational beings and that Nature or Providence urges us onward and upward. Man, he declares in noble words, cannot get away from the idea of right.

It is this robust belief in the worth of the individual citizen which ennobles the Declaration of the Rights of Man and renders the French Revolution, despite its excesses, a bracing influence in the making of the modern world. " France

did more than
conquer Europe," writes Sorel in an eloquent
passage, "she
converted her. Victorious even in their defeat,
the French
won over to their ideas the very nations which
revolted against
their domination. The princes most eagerly
bent on penning
in the Revolution saw it, on returning from their
crusade,
sprouting in the soil of their own estates, which
had been
fertilized by the blood of French soldiers. The
French
Revolution only ceased to be a source of strife
between France
and Europe to inaugurate a, political and social
revolution
which in less than half a century has changed the
face of the
European world/'